

“Today’s announcement of several Californians being appointed to advisory positions at the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that the Secretary of Agriculture recognizes the important role California plays in U.S. agriculture. I have worked with many of the new appointees for years, some for decades, and I am confident their expertise in California agriculture will be a tremendous benefit for our Valley, state and nation’s farm economy.

“Secretary Tom Vilsack made a wise choice in selecting Karen Ross of California as his chief of staff. Karen has been in the agriculture business for 30 years as a farmer. She has worked nationally to improve rural economies by promoting on-farm processing, rural electric cooperatives, and she has promoted agri-tourism. Karen has seen all sides of agriculture and will be a major asset to Secretary Vilsack, USDA, and farmers across our nation.

“I also applaud Secretary Vilsack for appointing Valley dairyman Ray Souza to the newly-established Dairy Advisory Committee. Ray is one of our Valley’s best and most respected dairy producers, and has always been a strong advocate on behalf of Valley agriculture. His knowledge of California’s dairy industry will be important to the Secretary on the new Dairy Advisory Committee.

“Finally, Secretary Vilsack named 8 California agricultural leaders to serve on the Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee, several of which are from the San Joaquin Valley. Bill Smittcamp of Wawona Frozen Foods, Vaughn Koligian of Sun-Maid Growers, Lisa McNeece of Grimmway Enterprises, and Dianne Nury of Vie-Del Company will undoubtedly do an excellent job representing Valley agriculture and advising Secretary Vilsack on issues affecting the fruit and vegetable industry.”